

VOICES ISRAEL
GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026



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CONTENTS

Contents.....	2
President's Letter.....	3
Meeting Dates, Times and Places - January 2026.....	4
Sad News.....	5
Letters.....	5
Congratulations to our Members	6
Announcements/Offers	6
WorldWide Poetry (WWP)	8
Baldrick's War Poems	8
Calls for Submissions.....	9
Voices Israel Workshop.....	13
Our Members' Art.....	14
An Interview with Peter Bernstein ..	15
Black/White	20
Remember Forever	23
Temptation	25
Fink's Bar	27
Why VideoPoetry?	30
Book Review	31
Member's Photo.....	35
The Thinker (<i>Le Penseur</i>), by Auguste Rodin	36



**Hayim Nahman Bialik
Photographic Portrait**
[Wikipedia]

Save this Date
Tuesday 13th January at 7pm (Israel time) for Voices Israel Workshop on Light – Poetry Reading on Zoom



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

To read a poem in January is as lovely as to go for a walk in June.
Jean Paul Friedrich Richter

Dear Friends,

Sad News — what a terrible end to 2025 for our people. Another horrific and tragic terrorist attack — this time in Australia. Our former President, Susan Olsburgh, has written a letter to our Australian members on behalf of all our members; it appears on page 5 of this Newsletter.

Workshop — our fantastic pre-Chanukah workshop on *Light*, presented by Elana Dorfman, was so well attended that there wasn't sufficient time to read the poems written during the workshop. Therefore, a poetry reading will be held on **Tuesday, 13 January, at 7:00 pm (Israel time)** on Zoom for all those who attended and would like to read their poems. All other members are invited to listen to the poems being read. An invitation will be sent to all members very soon with registration instructions, which also appear on page 13 of this Newsletter.

Anthology 2026 — the submission period has begun and will continue until **15 March 2026**. All members are invited to submit up to three previously unpublished poems. Full details appear on page 9 of this Newsletter.

Reuben Rose Prize — we eagerly await the results of our prestigious competition and expect news very soon.

Bar Sagi Prize — we are now accepting submissions for the Bar Sagi competition for young poets in Israel. Please help us publicise the competition to your children, grandchildren, and any teachers you may know. Full details are available on our website: <https://voicesisrael.com/bar-sagi-prize/>. Poems may be submitted until **15 February 2026**.

Membership Fees — I am still trying to contact the last few members who have not yet paid their membership fee for 2025. I suggest that you make the 2025 payment together with your fee for 2026. The fee for 2025 is **NIS 120** for Israeli residents and **\$40** for overseas members. For 2026, the fee will be just **NIS 100** for Israeli residents and **\$35** for overseas members if you pay early, making a total of **NIS 220 or \$75**.

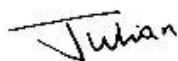
All members may take advantage of the 2026 early-bird rates (until **31 March 2026**), which are **NIS 100** for Israeli residents and **\$35** for overseas members.

To make your payment, please see details on this page of our website:
<https://voicesisrael.com/about-voices-israel/membership/>

Newsletter — please continue sending your artwork, photos, essays, letters, and, of course, poems to newsletter.voices@gmail.com. Members truly enjoy reading and viewing what you create, and it is wonderful to share the many and varied talents of our community.

Have a great month, and let us hope and pray for a successful, healthy, happy, and peaceful **2026** for us all.

Kind regards,



Julian Alper,
President, Voices Israel.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

MEETING DATES, TIMES AND PLACES - JANUARY 2026

SOUTHERN	TEL AVIV	JERUSALEM	UPPER GALILEE
Meeting via Zoom Sunday, January 25 at 5:00 PM	Meeting via Zoom Thursday, January 29 at 7:00 PM	Meeting via Zoom Tuesday, January 30 at 7:30 PM	Wednesday, January 7 at 10:30. at the home of Reuven and Yehudit. 128 Keren HaYesod Artists Quarter, Tzfat
Coordinator: Miriam Green miriamsgreen@gmail.com	Coordinator: Mark L. Levinson Mobile: 054-444-8438 nosnivel@netvision.net.il	Coordinator: Avril Meallem Tel: 02-567-0998 aemeallem@gmail.com	Coordinator: Reuven Goldfarb Tel: 04-697-4105 Mobile: 058-414-0262 poetsprogress@gmail.com
HAIFA Tuesday, January 27 at 7:00 PM at Wendy Blumfield's home Contact Naomi Yalin for details	NETANYA/SHARON Monday, January 26 at 7:00 PM at Susan Olsburgh's home 2/6 Zalman Shazar, 3rd floor Ramat Poleg	GLOBAL GROUP 1 Meeting via Zoom Thursday, January 15 at 19:30 Israel time	GLOBAL GROUP 2 Meeting via Zoom Sunday, January 25 at 19:00 Israel time
Coordinator: Naomi Yalin Mobile: 054-794-3738 naomiyalin@gmail.com	Coordinator: Susan Olsburgh Mobile: 054-919-3575 olsburgh.susan@gmail.com	Coordinator: Shoshana Kent Mobile: +972-52-808-9365 y2nosh@gmail.com	Coordinator: Judy Koren Mobile: +972-54-741-7860 koren.judy@gmail.com

**Save this Date - Tuesday 13th January at 7pm (Israel time) for
Voices Israel Workshop on Light – Poetry Reading on Zoom**

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

SAD NEWS

Linda Goldberg z"l

We are sad to inform you of the passing of our dear member, **Linda Goldberg z"l**. We extend our sincere condolences to her family.

LETTERS

Letter to our Australian Members

Dear Australian Members of Voices Israel,

On behalf of our organisation I want to say we are thinking of you and the Jewish community in Sydney and elsewhere. The Bondi massacre was a shocking start to Hanukah and the reverberations are still very much felt. We hope that you and your families are safe and well and that the bereaved families continue to be consoled by the worldwide support.

I am sure the entire Voices Israel membership is joining me in sending warmest best wishes to you all and a refuah shleimah to those injured on that forever to be remembered first night of Hanukah

Very sincerely
Susan Olsburgh

From Susan Bell

Hi all Voices friends,

I'm writing to tell you about a movie I saw at the Solidarity Film Festival at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque. It's called: Beethoven's Nine: Ode to Humanity (2024) "A film about music, war and hope. It follows 9 unique individuals, including Ukrainian musicians, a deaf composer, a Polish rock star, a best-selling author, a legendary cartoonist and the director himself, as they grab the Ninth's legacy." That's the official blurb. And here's the trailer:

<https://www.solidaritytlveng.org/allfilms/beethoven's-nine>

It was an interesting and moving movie that talks about conflict areas and about Beethoven and the "meaning" of the symphony. Highly recommended (by me!). Part way through the movie I realised the director Larry Weinstein is Judih's brother. So her and Gadi's story is told too.

The message of Beethoven's 9th Symphony is: (quote) The words in the final movement were taken from the "Ode to Joy" poem written by Friedrich von Schiller in 1785. The poem has a strong message to all mankind: it is about living in peace and harmony together.

Rather than pausing work on the project, Weinstein decided to incorporate his own search for humanity into the documentary and that is where Judih's story is told. As we know Judih stood for "living in peace and harmony". I was moved to tears. Larry was at Judih's funeral but was afraid to come for the premiere of this movie (he admitted, because of the Iranian attack on Israel in the middle of the year). However, there was a zoom interview with Larry in Toronto after the movie. Some of his/their relatives were in the audience, also from Nir Oz.

The movie is on again at the TLV Cinematheque and I think is worth seeing.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MEMBERS

To - **Isaac Cohen** for his many successes throughout the month.

To - **Mark Levinson** – Several poems by Mark L. Levinson are included in *The Water and Us* — an anthology donating all its profits to WaterAid, which is an organization providing clean water to people in 22 countries who would otherwise be without it. The book is available on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Water-Us-Poems-WaterAid/dp/B0G25FRX4C> .

To - **Pesach Rotem**, whose poem "The Contrarian" was published in *Constellations* – you can read it here: <http://www.constellations-lit.com/issues/Styled/vol15.html>.

To - **Helen Bar-Lev** and **Stanley H Barkan** who have each had a poem included on Images Poetry YouTube channel - you can see them reading their poems [here](#).

To - **Larry Lefkowitz**, whose short story "In Fink's Bar" was selected for publication by Niv Magazine – you can read the story here - <https://www.nivmag.com/articles/in-finks-bar>. Another short story by Larry, "Fink's Bar", can be read on [page 27](#) of this Newsletter.

To - **Julian Alper**, whose micropoem "Nocturnal Merfolk and accompanying photo were selected by Writing on the Wall for its Chanukah feature. You can read the poem and see the photo in the Poet's Corner section of this Newsletter.

To - **Klarina Priborkin**, whose poem "Forgotten Snapshot" was selected by Writing on the Wall for its Chanukah feature. You can read the poem in the Poet's Corner section of this Newsletter.

To - **Julian Alper**, whose poem "Heaven-Bound" and accompanying photo was published by the Lehrhaus. You can read the poem here - <https://thelehrhaus.com/culture/heaven-bound/>.

To - **Pessy Krausz**, whose poem "Prejudice and Pride" was published in the Netanya Poetry Please booklet and in the Hanassi blog – you can read the poem here: <https://bkhanassi.blogspot.com/p/prejudice-and-pride.html>

To - **Fran Levin**, whose creative writing "24 Hadley Court" was published by ofthebook. You can read it here: <https://ofthebookpress.com/fran-levin-24-hadley-court/>

ANNOUNCEMENTS/OFFERS

ESRA Book Shop Haifa - ESRA (English Speaking Residents Association) has opened a SECOND-HAND ENGLISH BOOKSHOP in HAIFA. All are welcome to visit and explore the wonderful collection of books of all genres. Voices poets may like to donate one copy of their collections to expand our poetry shelf. It would draw attention to your great work. Members who have access to Haifa are welcome to donate or just visit. 5 Rehov Kiryat Sefer - adjacent to Kiryat Sefer Circle on Moriah, Ahuza.

Opening hours:

Sunday to Thursday 10.00 till 12.00 and 16.00 to 18.00 and Friday 10.00 till 12.00.



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

 WRITING ON THE WALL
invites you to join their

CREATIVE WORKSHOP

To think, reflect, and shape
writing that we know is forming
but is not yet fully spoken.



LIMITED SPOTS AVAILABLE

JANUARY 2026
ON ZOOM

email us:  info@writingonthewall.io

Writing on the Wall is offering a **free Zoom workshop** – an open, supportive space for conversation, reflection, and exploration through writing. 

Hosted by our founders, Prof. **William Kolbrener** and writer Ronit Eitan, the workshop will be guided by prompts and shared discussion, offering participants an opportunity to develop ideas, explore new work, and write alongside others.

The workshop is open to those considering a submission to our upcoming **Hope / Exhale** BALAGAN issue, as well as **anyone looking for a dedicated hour to write and reflect**.

-  End of January
-  Sunday evening (IST) / Sunday morning (Eastern Time, U.S.)
-  1 hour
-  Free on Zoom

 Email **info@writingonthewall.io** to reserve your spot.

Spaces are limited.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

WORLDWIDE POETRY (WWP)

- Inside the poetic world of Gad Kaynar-Kissinger | The Jerusalem Post
- Poem of the week: Winter Walk by Lynette Roberts | Poetry | The Guardian
- The best poetry books of 2025 | Poetry | The Guardian
- The Blogs: Stories and Lies | Gershon Hepner | The Times of Israel
- Book Review: 'Fear Less,' by Tracy K. Smith - The New York Times
- Pubs and poetry book targets men's mental health in Bradford
- 'If you're grieving poetry has power beyond words' - The Jewish Chronicle - The Jewish Chronicle
- Jewish heroine Hannah Senesh gets a new narrative in this Canadian book

BALDRICK'S WAR POEMS

<https://youtu.be/uHSvKNQNzc0?si=CddLSzxzNz5kce4V>



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Voices Israael Anthology 2026

The submission period for the 2026 Anthology starts on Sunday December 14th, 2025 and runs through Sunday **March 15th, 2026, Israeli time.**

The editorial board then reviews all submissions, makes its decisions, and sends notices out to contributors. We aim to produce and print the volume by July or August. It is then distributed to paid-up Voices Israel members and others who have ordered and paid for copies. Copyright for individual poems is retained by the author of each poem. Copyright for the anthology belongs to Voices Israel Group of Poets in English.

How to Submit

A button to submit poems appears at the bottom of the page - [Submitting to the Anthology – Voices Israel Group of Poets in English](#). **It functions only during the submissions period. Before clicking on that button please read the following guidelines and instructions.**

There is no fee for submitting poems for publication in our Anthology.

Poems must be submitted using the Voices Israel Online Submission Manager, powered by Submittable. This is the only way to submit your poems. Email submissions to any of our team will not be considered.

- You **MUST** read the full Guidelines at the top of the submission form on the Submittable page.
- **Important!** Please note that poems must be submitted one by one on Submittable, each poem in a separate submission form.
- **You may submit a maximum of 3 poems** on any subject. We *prefer* poems that fit on one page (up to 40 lines including stanza breaks but not including title), but we will *accept* poems of up to 60 lines. Lines longer than 68 characters, including punctuation and spaces between words, will be counted as two lines.
- Judging is anonymous and the poems are judged “blind” — the editorial team does not see the poet’s name. **Therefore you must not include your name or identifying details anywhere except (if you wish) in your bio, which the judges do not see.** (There is no *need* to include your name anywhere, since the name you registered as the owner of the account is the one the poem is attributed to). **Failure to observe this rule will result in that poem not being considered.**
- **Poems must be previously unpublished.** However poems that have been included in the monthly poetry pages attached to our newsletter, or were written at Voices Israel workshops and appeared in the resulting chapbook of the workshop, are not considered “published” (since they were circulated only to a closed group of members, not available to the general public) and will be considered.

Full details are here - <https://voicesisrael.com/anthology/submitting-to-the-anthology/>

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Judith Magazine, a new online **Journal Of Jewish Letters, Arts & Empowerment** seeks submissions – more information can be found [here](#).

The Jewish Literary Journal (a monthly online journal) seeks submissions of up to 5 poems - further details can be found [here](#).

OfTheBook Literary Journal publishes fiction, non-fiction, and poetry from new and established voices welcomes submissions of up to 10 pages of poetry, with one poem per page. Further details can be found [here](#).

Minyan Magazine (<https://www.minyanmag.com/>) publishes poetry and flash fiction written by Jews and their allies alongside one another. Although we like work with a Jewish theme, we also enjoy work with secular themes. Send us your best, regardless of the theme! Please note that we are a journal of tolerance. It would be a great idea to look at our previous issues to get a sense of what we publish, and all of our issues are free to read! Unsolicited submissions containing three to five previously unpublished poems or up to three flash fiction stories are welcome year-round.

Poetry Submissions

- Please make sure that your poetry submission contains only one Word document or .pdf with your 3-5 previously unpublished poems.
- Please include your short bio in your cover letter.
- Work should be submitted using our [Submittable](#) link.
- We provide a free option and a \$5 option for expedited submissions. Using the \$5 option guarantees that we will respond within 10 days. This small contribution goes towards keeping the magazine going.

Submissions to **New English Review** (the monthly magazine) should be sent to kendra@newenglishreview.org. There is no word limit, but please keep in mind that your work will be read online. Submissions for the coming month are due by the 20th of the previous month. (Example, submissions for January must be in by the 20th of December.) Timely or news-relevant pieces will be accepted at any time. If you wish to submit, please click [here](#) for guidelines on submitting.

VAST CHASM, publishes “work that explores the human experience, including flash and short fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, and other nonconforming work.” They accept submissions “year-round, on a rolling basis, for their quarterly online issues.” No fee to submit.

The Weekly Poems Contest - All Poets Invited

Weekly Poems invites all poets from everywhere on Earth to submit a *weekly poem*. Poems must be 15 lines or shorter, written during the current week and submitted by Saturday, with the winner published on Sunday. Submissions are open eight months of the year, for three weeks per month, opening on the first Monday of the month.

Submission & Publication Months

Submissions are open eight months of the year, with issues of *Weekly Poems* published on the first three Sundays following the first Monday of the month.

- Period 1: February, March, April
- Period 2: June, July, August
- Period 3: October, November

More details can be found [here](#).

WRITE-HAUS

Write-haus is an Israeli journal that features writers of all genres and artists/interdisciplinary work every week in their Sunday showcase online feature. It's free to submit examples of your work. <https://write-haus.com/sunday-showcase/>

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

PALETTE POETRY: “Submissions for our Featured Poetry category are open year-round to poets at any stage of their careers. Featured poems are published online only and will spotlight a number of poems from new authors each month. We highly encourage emerging authors to submit.”

Basket Magazine Online Journal seeks submissions. Please submit up to three poems to editor@basketmagazine.co.uk as a .pdf, .doc or .docx file. Feel free to include a brief cover note/bio, though this will not affect our decision-making — it’s just nice to know about people. We will only consider previously unpublished poems — this includes work that has previously appeared online in any form (social media, etc). We do not consider simultaneous submissions.

Thimble Literary Magazine is open for submissions **February**, March, May, June, August, September, November, and December. In other words, all months except January, April, July, and October. For more information see <https://www.thimblelitmag.com/submissions/>

Big Thinking Publishing

December Magazine Submissions 2025 – Poetry Edition (Issue #5)
Magazine submissions for Poems, Tales & Other English Words, Issue #5 (Poetry Edition) are open from 1 December 2025 – 1 February 2026, with a publication date of 1 March 2026. For full details, visit our [Magazine Submissions page](#) .

Starboard Press

The First Light Spring 2026 Poetry Contest is the second in a series of biannual contests. All entries are eligible to be selected for publication in the Spring issue of First Light Journal due to come out in April 2026. For more details see <https://starboard.press/poetry-contest-2/>

Ink in Thirds

POETRY – submit up to 3 poems (in one form)

We'll consider anything from free verse to haiku to haibun to you-name-it. But, of course, we love **Three Line Poetry**. **::insert wink::** Invented and experimental forms are always welcome. So, show us something new. But we especially like mental floss, unforgettable imagery that clings to your marrow. *Be different, unique, or weird.* In fact, give us something to chew on for months, even years to come.

October 1st – Jan 31st for our spring/summer issues. (March 2026 – 10th Anniversary)

<https://inkinthirds.org/submit-form/>

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Writing on the Wall

Calling all Jewish & Israeli Creatives: Submit Your Work for BALAGAN - The Theme: EXHALE

After October 7th, **Writing on the Wall** and **BALAGAN Magazine** were born as creative responses to rising antisemitism as a way to show the world the depth, diversity, and humanity of who we are today.

Our mission is simple: **to tell our own story - as Israelis, as Jews - not the one told about us.**

We're now accepting submissions for **essays, poetry, photography, and art** for our upcoming issue on *Hope*, themed "Exhale."

The theme speaks for itself.

If this speaks to you, we'd love for you to **join our community, share your voice, and be part of this creative conversation.**

Explore past issues and learn more here: <https://writingonthewall.io/>

Deadline extended for Submissions: January 10, 2025



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

VOICES ISRAEL WORKSHOP

Phase 2 – the Poetry reading will be on Tuesday January 13th at 7pm

Please note that the workshop presentation will not be repeated – this session is just for the reading of poems produced during and after the workshop.

To register please use this link:

<https://forms.gle/A5mdFBkJKCZ7m2wP9>

VOICES ISRAEL PRESENTS:

A POETRY WORKSHOP ON LIGHT

FACILITATOR: ELANA DORFMAN

SPONSORED BY: VOICES ISRAEL

Join us for a poetic exploration of light — the miracle that surrounds and sustains us. Together, we'll reflect on the many forms of light in our lives — the light of insight, love, and spirit — and the essential role of darkness that helps it shine.

During this interactive workshop, we will:

- ✓ Read and discuss selected poems about light
- ✓ Spend time writing our own poems celebrating light in all its meanings

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

OUR MEMBERS' ART

Cover Picture - “The Wedding” – by Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman

Three-dimensional glass fusion, mixed media on double sided glass.



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER BERNSTEIN

By Bob Findysz

On a perfectly calm, mild mid-autumn morning after too long a hot, dry spell, as skies were gathering storm clouds in the distance, I left home on a hilltop island of tree-lined paths and well-tended lawns west of Jerusalem and made my way into the city and out to its southeastern edge to another oasis which has also survived demanding terrain, hostile neighbors and urban sprawl: Ramat Rachel, founded before the State but still, like my own, a cooperative community in an age of privatized kibbutzim to meet with Peter Bernstein at his bright, airy home. We sat beneath his vine-draped *pergola* surrounded by a thick lawn and garden full of fruit trees, vegetables and flowers. Following are

the questions which guided our conversation and an accurate if not exact rendering of his responses.



anthology. In it I speak about a cherry tree in my garden (a photo of Peter and one of his much-loved cherry trees appears at the end of this interview, BF):

"If the choice were solely up to me,
Please bury me under my cherry tree.
Producing fruits of succulent flavour,
The least I can do is return the favour..."

From time to time, I have had something printed in the VOICES Israel monthly newsletter. I had a poem called **SCENES FROM A MASSACRE** in the Poet's Corner section of the October 2025 issue (and included in the [appendix](#) to this Newsletter). Very contemporaneous and political.

From the little that I have gathered about you, mainly from your biographical sketch in the 2025 anthology published by VOICES Israel and recently launched, you live on Kibbutz Ramat Rachel growing cherry trees part-time and helping to raise your grandchildren. C'est tout. A bit enigmatic, to say the least. More about that later.

1. *How would you characterize the poetry you write? Do you write only In English or also in Hebrew? Do you have any samples of other poems you have written and have perhaps not yet published, which you can share with us?*

I only write in English and don't feel proficient enough to write in Hebrew. I would say that my poetry is a response to triggers in my life and the world in which I live. Usually it begins with a feeling or thought which grows more vivid and then I sit down and write. Some of my writing is very political in nature. I like to write with line endings that rhyme. There is a piece entitled **LAST WILL AND...** published in the 2023 VOICES Israel



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

I have a few, new poems, "still in the drawer" so to speak, which I would like to share now. They reflect the kinds of subjects that interest and/or concern me. (*Because they have not yet been published, these four poems are at the end of this newsletter as an appendix which does not appear on the VOICES website in order to permit Peter to submit them to other journals, etc. BF*)

- *Do you remember when you started writing poetry? If so, how did you begin?*

At the age of 22, I began writing poetry seriously. Before that, it was only scribbling. I was doing an apprenticeship on my first real job as a site manager for a construction contractor building homes. Three months of training in various aspects of the profession. Hands on, alongside fellow laborers. However, given British social stratification, I had to take my tea breaks with the management, of which I was now one. For about a year, I wrote. Then, for over 50 I didn't write a line. In the past few years I have resumed writing -- I am now 80.

- *Are there times of the day/ week, a special place and/ or other conditions which you find are conducive to writing, poetry or otherwise?*



My poetry writing is more off than on. I undergo a process of gradual awareness, absorbing, musing, until something signals within me and I start to write. I prefer to compose in solitude. I have never participated in a writing workshop or group.

2. *Is there a poet(ess) or more whom you particularly enjoy reading? If so, who? In what language? Why do you like their writing?*

At about 16 I began to appreciate classical music. Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, in particular. From listening to music, I proceeded to writing. From a sense of rhythm to writing in rhyme. Once I began writing poetry I also discovered other writers: early T.S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell, William Carlos Williams, Yeats. These poets influenced my early writing. Although I stopped writing for a very long time, I continued reading poetry. Thus, I found Philip Larkin. I read a lot of his poetry. Nowadays I mainly read individual poems in various publications, like the VOICES Israel newsletter and anthology or an online journal called "Rattle". Besides, I am an avid fan of mystery novels.

3. *Have you studied/ collaborated with other writers of poetry and/ or prose in English? If so, who? When? Where?*

I have never formally studied creative writing of any sort. I prefer writing alone. Introspectively. I am interested in talking to but not composing with fellow writers nor taking a course.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

4. *On a more personal note, at the end of your poem presented in the 2025 VOICES Israel anthology, you ask to be remembered "as the person who [you] used to be." Who was that person? How have you changed? Where were you born and raised? Did you complete undergraduate school? If so, where did you go to university? Did you complete any advanced degrees? When did you move to Israel? Were you alone or with other family members? If so, with whom? Was there some trigger that caused you to relocate?*

That piece in the 2025 anthology is about aging. When I was in my 30s working for social services in London, a young person asked me if I had been in WWI... Not WWII. Old before my time? The beginning of my awareness of the aging process. Over the years, when going to concerts at the Jerusalem Theatre, I would see elderly people with canes or walkers. Hobbling along, maybe with dementia, but people who were nevertheless once and still are somebody. Never a nobody.

I feel my generation has lived in the best of times. The post WWII baby boomers. We have had plenty of challenges but also choices. Seemingly limitless choices. My wife, Adrienne, and I were both born in London. I did my undergraduate degree in politics and economics at the London School of Economics. When we married in 1970, Adrienne had recently returned from a year in Israel and wanted us to immigrate. However, I was an only child and felt I couldn't leave my mother alone. After my mother's death, we came to Israel on a pilot program to explore options for immigration. In 1983, we embarked on an adventure. Our first two children were already 9 and 7 years old. We spent six weeks together visiting family in the UK and the US. And then, we settled down to the business of living our dream as it were. In Israel.

- *Where did you start out living here in Israel? How did you get to Ramat Rachel and how long have you lived there? Did you ever work in the orchards, with the cherry trees that you so like to grow nowadays? What have you done as a kibbutz member, professionally, politically, socially, culturally?*

On that pilot trip to Israel that we went on, we discovered the Arava. When we immigrated, we chose to live on Kibbutz Grofit, near Eilat. I

worked in their date palm groves. After we moved to Ramat Rachel in 1987, I continued working with fruit trees. Also worked in landscaping, cultivating the public gardens and swimming pool on the kibbutz.

I took a year off to study and qualify as a carpenter and occasionally I've taken some refresher courses in orchard husbandry. But mostly I learned from hands-on

experiences. Over a lifetime on kibbutzim, I have served on various and sundry committees but have never been a chairperson. I think the Hebrew language barrier has been part of the reason. It has been hard gaining fluency after immigrating at an older age.

Although retired, I still work in the orchards. Pruning and training young trees into the shape we want them to grow and bear fruit. From the age of a year. The current trend is to grow rows of saplings like a hedge. My mentors describe this as creative pruning. For more efficient picking. Today, the kibbutz has only about 70 dunams of cherry trees. The orchards



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

used to be hundreds of dunams; but, Jerusalem forced us to sell most of our agricultural land. High rise buildings are now growing all around us. Cherry trees are usually economically profitable for 20 years. However, I am not sure the treelets I am now nurturing will outlive me due to the continued incursions onto our lands.

- *In your 2025 VOICES Israel anthology's bio-sketch, you mentioned being a fulltime grandparent. What does that entail? Could you share a bit about your family members here in Israel and/ or still living abroad?*

Our youngest child was born on Grofit. She and her older brother are both now married and live on Ramat Rachel, each has two children. Our oldest lives on Beit Guvrin, a privatized kibbutz near Kiryat Gat, she is married with three children. We have always helped out with our grandchildren whenever their parents needed a hand. On Beit Guvrin, too. Today we are still very engaged with our youngest two grandchildren, who study in the city and need chauffeuring to and from school near the Jerusalem Theatre. After school lunch and playtime, too. They are our premiere priority. Everything else takes a back seat. Including my pruning of trees.

Having been one of the youngest of all my cousins, I have a few if any family left anywhere in the world. However, whenever a grandchild reaches the age of *mitzvot*, I take them for a visit to the UK. Roots are still deep there.

5. *When you aren't writing or pursuing one or the other of your declared interests, how do you spend your time today? Work? Family? Community? Hobbies? Other, personal pursuits?*

Adrienne and I continue to attend classical music concerts together at the Jerusalem Theatre. She is still ballroom dancing. I dance like an elephant. I very much enjoy playing bridge but don't have enough time to really get into it. There is a club on Beit Zeit and I can play socially on Ramat Rachel. We have various groups of friends with common interests.

I read a lot, including scientific subjects and science fiction, which, as I grew older, I discovered interested me. In addition, I like thrillers/ spy books. Mick Herron reminds me of T. S. Eliot, painting poetic pictures within the plot. Rich language. After reading a manuscript of "The Waste Land", I realized how vile an anti-Semite T.S. Eliot was,



VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

which turned me off on his poetry. Wendy Cope, probably the best selling of contemporary British poets, wrote a *pastiche* of "The Waste Land" that is brilliant. Well worth a read.

In the UK I still have some good friends from the time I worked in London, after completing my university studies. Some know each other. Whenever I visit with a teenaged grandchild, we get together again. It feels as if no time has lapsed.

Both Adrienne and I love gardening. Since she is so involved with the garden at home, I was forced to look after the kibbutz gardens, where I could do it "my way". The swimming pool also used to be a part of these gardens. However, since the kibbutz built and expanded our hotel, it is now part of a country club/ spa which hotel guests and kibbutz members have access to. In earlier days, all the members had shabbat and holiday duties in the hotel. As well as catching chickens or picking fruit in high season. For years, Ramat Rachel was under attack. From its founding, it was a "rump" kibbutz, shelled by Jordanians and Egyptians, with few members and very little to show for their efforts. Profits needed to be reinvested. Between 1948 and 1967, it remained threatened, on the border. Since then, the kibbutz has grown more prosperous, safe and comfortable. After twenty years in a small, cozy if cramped flat, we moved to and now live in a more spacious duplex apartment. It gives me pleasure to see the physical marks on the kibbutz left by my own work/life.

6. *Anything else you would like to add?*

There is talk of privatizing the kibbutz so that all members would take more personal responsibility for their own welfare. That might not be a bad thing.

Peter says - If a reader would like to contact me about anything in this interview, s/he is invited to email me: pab@ramat-rachel.org.il

Take a look at the appendix at the end of this newsletter with four of Peter's poems.

BLACK/WHITE

by Birgit Talmon

A day in a young mother's life

Arm-in-arm we brave the storms of autumn Ernest and I and I shiver from the shock and the plummeting degrees. 1928 is drawing to a close and will soon be forgotten to most; never to me.

You, my sweet little Brian, were asleep safe and sound that evening in May, when Ernest proposed to me. I just smiled elusively at his tie pin. Although I had rehearsed many times a situation such as that, suddenly I did not know whether a good or a bad thing had befallen you and me. Still ignorant of my past, Ernest looked utterly taken aback by my silence.

That spring is gone and I am cold. The bridge, you know the one you and I have stood on so many times gazing down, while you chuckled joyfully as the ships sailed by, that bridge always feels much longer in strong headwinds.

When the milk boy came down the road this morning with the rattling bottles, it suddenly struck me that from tomorrow I shall need only a quart. I pulled the chair next to your bed, where you still slept soundly. It seemed I could gain a little extra time with you that way, while waiting for the birds' first twittering from the backyard. Finally wide awake you told me a whole long story in your own language while I was preparing us to leave, pondering over and over again on what I had started and which could not, in all probability, be stopped.

I must concentrate on the pavement for a second. The black pram rolling towards us resembles too much the one you had, love. Head bowed I continue and my eyes are drawn to the stretched buttonholes of my coat. They seemed on the verge of bursting as you grew blond and blue-eyed within me.

As you were having your breakfast the landlord was at it again pressing for the rent and complaining about your crying. I nearly threw the truth in his face that soon, too soon now, he would not be disturbed by you anymore.

It was so lovely to see you tucking into that extra lump of butter in the porridge. As for me, I simply could not swallow a bite, just sat there watching your little face, trying to concentrate on details, like your sweet little



ears, so that I shall be able to remember them. Perhaps tufts of hair will fill them, when you grow to be a man. You might even become as bald as your father, who stopped smiling, when I told him you were on your way. Your father, who forgot everything about our arrangement when you began to grow and claim more space, bulging out for all to see, and I no longer could hide your coming from the others in the office.

Well knowing that gossip would run riot and that rumors would not stop at the truly 'married one's' door, he fired me, who was too proud to beg.

Oh, how you screamed and were difficult to drag away, when we ran into Felix as he rounded the corner on his way into our backyard, the tail of his breakfast dangling from the corner of his mouth. But we were late, you see, because of all the packing. Until now I could truthfully promise that you could play with him and pad his soft fur on our return home.

'See you later' we even called out to him as on every other day.

Down by the crossing, you dragged me in the direction of the day nursery as usual. I heard a voice say – "No, not today". That voice was mine. A couple of months ago I simply just told the nurses that we were moving.

We shared my handkerchief as we walked hand in hand all the way down to the station. I wanted to turn around, run away from it all, from agreements and signatures, run someplace where nobody could separate us. But

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

cleaning other peoples' houses did not lead to this "someplace" during your two years and my pawned pieces of jewelry were not enough to keep body and soul together for long.

A brave little fellow you were carrying your small suitcase with your toys, while I dragged along the heavier one. I had told the lady in advance that you still have occasional accidents and that I would put extra diapers in the suitcase for the journey. Your beloved Auntie has the extra key. She will remove your bed before I come home.

It's three o'clock. How far away are you now, my love? Are you still crying? Good that your Teddy is with you. I was not to know where you were heading. They only told me that it's out of town. Are you sucking your thumb as always when frightened?

Somebody is pulling at my sleeve. Ah! Ernest again; should know by now that I don't like that. He says that I am walking so fast that I don't even notice that the bridge is up. I guess it's because I want to get away as fast as possible from that place, you know. My nose is running; could it be the wind or am I still crying?

Instead of the handkerchief my fingertips run into the pen at the bottom of my bag; that pen, which my reluctant handheld to sign those indifferent papers. At the lawyer's office that hand wouldn't obey my brain, or was it the other way round? But this is for the best, isn't it! I am sure of it – almost. This way you'll have a father who will love you.

Today, the river ripples with cold, yet boiling angry waves as a steam ship heaves menacingly through the open leaves of the bridge. A steam ship from the other side of the world slips past me, while you, my little one, are slipping out of my life on board a steam train.

Can you reach up to the window and see the cows?

I have just hurled this, the most treacherous gold-tipped fountain pen in the world, over the railing. Let it disappear forever in the turbulent water. Ernest is silent. I have a feeling that he, in his own way, is well aware of his being allied to that pen and therefore has nothing to add. Right now I'll just leave him to his own devices.

I draw my eyes away from the water, and whom do you think I see, if not your grandpa's proud profile driving past in his black Ford. Well, yes, of course I know that he

lives near the bridge. It's just that I can't think very clearly at the moment.

On our small excursions to watch the ships sail by I hoped so often that he, on his way home from work, would catch sight of us and stop. Perhaps he really did see us, but the car never took us for a ride.

You were a real little bundle of mischief at the lawyer's office; emptying the waste bin on the carpet while ignoring the annoying ladies, who wanted to chuck you under the chin. You wouldn't even smile, when they photographed us, you in my arms in your little new coat.

Don't think for a moment I didn't notice how upset you were when you were handed over to the lady who is to accompany you and how you pulled hard at her bun while I, your mother, signed paper after paper until you no longer were mine.

I understood only too well your cries after me when I finally had to leave the office. Believe me, as I listened to your protests in the hall outside, my hands hugged the camera with the last precious moments. Ernest, who had arrived too early and had been waiting on the bench, approached me with a glass of water and a hug. That was an easy task all right. Not convincingly enough he had offered to come along with us, but no, I needed to be alone with this and I still do.

Ernest says that I am lost in my own thoughts, says that the bridge is almost down and that it is cold here. He gives my arm a slight pinch. I guess he is right, we have to continue. Only forward now. Soon I shall leave Ms. Axelrod to the past and become a Mrs. Smith without a past - the sort of person more easily accepted and respected.

You loved the Sundays in the park where you took your first uncertain steps on the path by the lake between Ernest and me strolling along with you as if we were your parents.

It's getting dark, time for your supper.

We walk in silence while the wind whips around the corners of the houses. We trudge endlessly. I have a huge blister on my bad foot. Ernest proposes that we take the tram, but I need all the privacy that the fresh air on my face can provide.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Somewhat like a stranger barging in on me, Ernest calls me darling at the entrance to the house and suggests that now that we are soon to become Mr. and Mrs., there should be nothing wrong about a little foretaste.

Can't he grasp that it's my Brian's bedtime and that first of all I have to lull him to sleep!

Something in the tone of Ernest's voice brings me back to reality. He stares at me much too forcefully. He seems really annoyed and might not even want me anymore. That must not happen. The price is paid – hopefully for a better life for me as well. So for the first time ever we sneak up to my little attic. If I avoid switching on the light, I'll only sense, not see the emptiness.

Ernest embraces me and again I hear the words you each day chuckled to me, when I picked you up from the nursery. Those same words you cried after me, as I turned my back on you. As Ernest presses me down on the mattress I feel a burning sensation in that back. Yes my love, of course you wanted to come home with me.

The wrought iron bed starts to bump under our weight. You, my little busybody has – no, had – the habit of pulling out the small piece of cardboard and this morning I did not have the sense to push it back. The too short leg is now pounding against the naked floorboards in time with that very same rhythm which eventually brought you into existence.

Each thrust shakes my little tin box on the bedside table and now, now it tumbles over the edge and drops onto the floor. I am sure of it, I just know it has opened and spread your lock of hair in all directions. I simply must get hold of my torch before a careless footsteps down from here. I'll tell Ernest to stay put and make believe that I have dropped my earring, while I pick up every single hair. For all in the world that lock must stay in the box.

Will they sing lullabies for you like I do – did? Lucky that I, in the very last moment, remembered to put the songbook in the suitcase.

Ernest is sighing in my ears. They are wet with salty drops which escaped my closed eyes. Could I only love someday again – perhaps even Ernest – without salt drops in my ears.

Goodnight, my love.

In about a week's time I shall see you again. The photographer promised to hurry up. From his darkroom you will come back to me - in black and white.

REMEMBER FOREVER

IT COULD HAVE BEEN ELIJAH THE PROPHET!

By Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman

I was 8 or 9 years old...we lived in Fürth, Germany. As every Friday evening after sunset, we were sitting at the Shabbat table, Papa with the prayer book doing the Kiddush (blessing of wine and bread)... The doorbell rang.

Strange, no one ever comes on Shabbat except specifically invited guests, and today no one was expected. With Papa's permission, Maria, who worked for us, went to open the door for a man. He looked very cold and hungry, dressed in truly ragged clothes—he came in almost frightened...ashamed, didn't know how to greet, feeling completely out of place in our warm



and beautiful dining room. I felt very sorry for him, very sad, but I said nothing.

Papa stood up, held out his hand, smiling, joyful... "Chaver Sheli (My friend) Sit down, sit down, Shabbat Shalom. Where are you from???" Papa welcomed him as if he were a long-ago friend who had come to meet him... cheerfully, with such warmth, with friendship, without any fear...

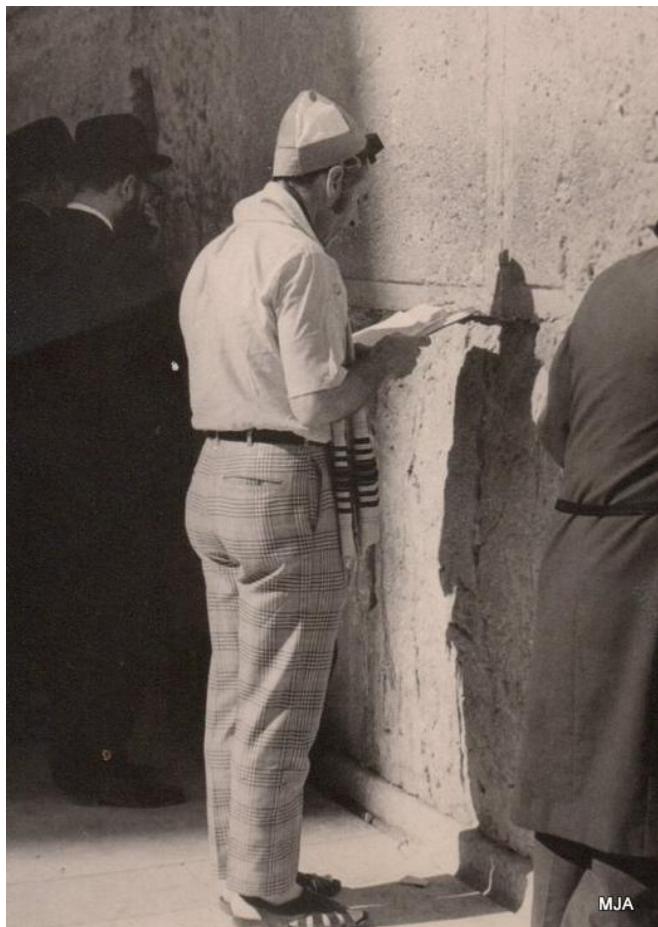
Maria brought another chair, and Papa sat him down next to him, instructing Maria to bring him the soup... and make sure it was piping hot. There weren't many words between them... but deep, gracious glances... His hand was shaking as I began to eat the chicken soup. He didn't raise his head; his concentration was on the soup. Obviously, he was very hungry, having not eaten in days. Papa had one dish brought, and another, and was happy that his "friend" was eating with gusto... and after the meat, vegetables, and Challah (the special bread eaten only on Shabbat) ... he ate everything, didn't speak, seemed to be gulping it all down, endlessly.

I remember looking at Papa and Mama's faces, wanting to understand things... but only looks... no words. But I had already understood everything because so many survivors always came home asking Papa for help. I heard so many horrendous and sad stories, saw so many tears, and I knew that each of them who came was looking for the dead in their families, seeking information, and it was my Papa who did everything possible for each of them because Papa was part of the "HAYAS." There was always a tear in Papa's eyes... there was always pain because he and Mama were also part



of those who were always looking for families, names, dead people... they helped each other. At home, Mama was always crying... Papa never cried, he always turned away... so he couldn't be seen.

When it seemed our guest was satisfied, Papa asked his name and they started talking... brothers, sisters, parents, family, dead people, camps, dead people, dead people. Always dead people.. He cried and told Papa that he wanted to go to Israel but couldn't because he had nothing. I remember him saying he thought someone was saved on a small boat from Greece and had arrived in Haifa... and he had to look for him... His voice broke with constant sobbing... Papa had already understood, he touched his hand lightly and said: 'Come tomorrow, after Shabbat, and I'll give you what you need. You'll go, you'll find it, don't worry... you'll go!



They truly seemed like brothers... they both knew that one must help the other, and if there's a chance of finding someone alive, one must do everything to help. Our host didn't say thank you... It wasn't necessary... he looked at Papa with a love and pain that expressed feelings that needn't be explained. They speak of a truth that is priceless. I was very proud of my Papa. For me, he was the greatest hero... everyone loved him... everyone respected him, and his word, they said, was like a bank loan. It was known: If Jonas says so, so shall it be! Dinner was over... Papa slowly rose and hugged our guest. Together they walked toward the door.

In the hallway there was a coat rack with Papa's overcoats. I especially loved the one he'd brought from Italy. It looked like it was made of fishbone, gray and white. With his black hair, he looked like an actor...my Papa was so handsome. the coat off the rack and placed it on the man's shoulders. I felt faint...The most beautiful coat I've ever seen, and Papa was giving it to a stranger I didn't even know...I felt my heart break...Papa, Papa, not that one!!!

I felt like crying...but I didn't say anything. They hugged each other. There were tears in both their eyes...they seemed like true companions...Papa was like that!

The door closed and Papa returned to the table. We were still seated—you don't get up until Papa gives permission... What follows I will never forget - never! Papa looked at Mama in a very strong way and said: "When the bell rang and Maria told you that there was a man we don't know, you gave her a sign to send him away. She instead looked at me, and I gave her the sign to take him inside. And PAPA pointed his finger at MAMA... I've never seen him do this, never... and he said: "YOU MUST NEVER CLOSE THE DOOR TO ANYONE WHO COMES TO ASK HELP FROM ME... YOU MUST NEVER THINK WHO HE IS OR OF WHERE HE CAME FROM, OR WHAT HE WANTS FROM ME... NO JEW MUST EVER LEAVE MY HOUSE WITHOUT RECEIVING WHAT HE CAME FOR....G-D SENT HIM FOR ME TO HELP HIM.

REMEMBER ALWAYS - YOU COULD HAVE SENT AWAY ELIJAHU HANAVI!!!

TEMPTATION

By Reuven Goldfarb

In the mid-70s, I lived in San Francisco, a long, though manageable, walk from the House of Love and Prayer on 9th Avenue. One Shabbat morning, when Shlomo was in town, I left my apartment on 15th Street in high anticipation. To daven with Shlomo was a rare treat, and I believed this meeting would be higher than usual, indeed, that it held messianic potential.

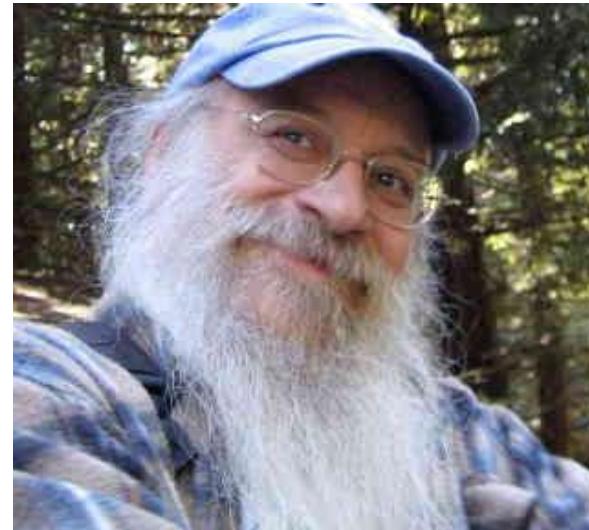
I wore my olive-drab army blanket, held in place at my throat with a safety pin and trailing behind me like a cape. A couple of moth holes completed the decorations. I strode eagerly forward, up and down the Buena Vista hills intervening between me and the House until I came to the edge of Golden Gate Park. There my progress was arrested by a cardboard box sitting partway open in the grass.

Now I have to go back and tell you that during my last year in college, at Lafayette, in Easton, Pennsylvania, my friends Bob and Lowell and I--and sometimes Steve or Eric--would go to a donut maker's side door at about 4 in the morning and buy warm glazed donuts from him for four cents apiece. (They were five cents apiece in the daytime at the bakery.) I was never a donut kid; my parents never bought that particular kind of confection, so this was my first real exposure--and what a great way to get introduced!

Subsequently, I learned about macrobiotics, health food, organic food, began to garden, to grow corn, carrots, radishes, rutabaga, squash, sunflowers, onions, tomatoes, and other crops. But now I was back on the street, engaged in a spiritual quest, going toward the House to daven with Shlomo on Shabbat morning, and was stopped by the sight of this red cardboard bakery box, with the lid partway up and grease stains visible from the outside--and inside were a dozen chocolate old-fashioned donuts.

Now I had learned about real donuts from glazed, the hard-edged flakes of sugar melting in your mouth, the puffy dough, the sugar rush, and had then expanded my range to that other, cakier texture possessed by old-fashioned--but with a chocolate icing! This was the ultimate in donut decadence.

I crouched down in the grass next to the box, opened the lid, and peered inside. Repeated admonitions from my mother ran through my head: not to eat food whose provenance I did not know, especially of doubtful



kashrut. I also knew I couldn't carry it on Shabbat—unless I wore it, which, with a donut, is not inconceivable. Hygienic considerations also entered in. Why was it lying open in the grass? Who left it there? How long ago? Had the insects discovered it yet? Was it poisoned? Had it been dosed?

Well, it looked pretty fresh. There were no ants around. So, finally—what would you do?—I broke off one piece and put it in my mouth. I chewed softly while the wonderful flavors permeated my body. One bite was not enough. I ate the whole donut, then a second one, and part of a third. Then I got up from my crouch and moved on.

Now that I had eaten, I did not feel quite as driven toward my destination, quite as sharp, quite as focused. I tried to capture some of my former energy, but it did not feel quite the same as before. I still wanted to go, but the Messianic dimension was missing. I remembered the story of the Ari and his disciples in Zefat.

In the middle of an ecstatic prayer experience, the Ari had suddenly announced, "Now! We must go up to Jerusalem! The Messiah is waiting for us there." His disciples wanted to go, too, but first they begged leave to say farewell to their wives and children. The spell was broken, and the Ari mourned. He said, sorrowfully, "If only you had been entirely willing to come with me at that moment, together we could have brought Mashiach." I wondered if I had forfeited that chance.

When I reached the House, I walked swiftly through the

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

open door. Shlomo was already davening across the room, his tallis over his head like a cowl. He caught my glance, and I saw an expression cross his face of mingled disappointment and regret. Shlomo often used to say, "What do we know?" especially with regard to the deeds of another. He was always inclined to grant the benefit of the doubt where human behavior was concerned. Who could know what really motivated an individual? What were a person's true intentions? What would be the long-term consequences of a questionable action? What do we know?

But as I looked at him across the room and felt the weight of my teacher's misgivings, I wondered how much of what I had gone through was already known to him, how much of the ESP of the Baal Shem or the Chozeh of Lublin he possessed, and I asked myself, "What does *he* know?"

— This true story was previously published in *Kol Chevra*.

FINK'S BAR

By Larry Lefkowitz

Thirty years I had lived in Jerusalem and never once entered Fink's Bar, the venerable and famous. Why this stubborn refusal on my part? I attribute it, first of all, to the fact that when I came to Israel, local males still prided themselves on drinking fruit juice and not alcoholic beverages. It was part of the pure *sabra* image then a part of the national zeitgeist.

Secondly, my association with bars, even when I lived in America, was negative. I was single then and lonely and bars only heightened my loneliness. In high school and college, too, I went to bars solely to placate my peers, without really enjoying it. I felt more at home in a library.

One day I decided to go to Fink's Bar. The idea had something about it of the appeal of a ritual: I would go once, in tribute to the bar that had, after all, existed 72 years and was considered even internationally the best bar in Israel. Perhaps, too, I had changed, or the ideology in Israel had changed: those wiser than me would characterize my hegira as simply a psycho-historical step manifesting my surrendering to post-Zionism. Whatever the reason, go I did.

The place was largely empty, which pleased me. A lot of noise and hail-fellow-well-met didn't strike my fancy. Maybe because of my personality. I liked the deep mahogany of the bar and tables. The walls were lined with photographs of famous visitors to the bar. One wall was completely covered with a collection of drinking mugs. The atmosphere was very intimate – sitting at the bar, if you raised a glass to drink, your elbows almost rubbed those of drinkers sitting at one of the few small tables.

I ordered a beer and sat at the bar. At one table, under a print that appeared to be that of a matador brandishing a red cloth, sat a man who looked familiar, though I could not place him. He was meticulously dressed in suit and tie. When I glanced at his face, the words: "At times in the evening a face/Looks at us out of the depths of a mirror," popped into my mind. And then it hit me why the man looked familiar: he was a dead ringer for the poem's author, the Argentine writer Borges. Borges whose writing I loved. Like me, he had little patience for novels. (I had tried my hand at writing some and invariably ran out of sufficient plot to carry them to completion.) His short stories fitted my attention span,

as well as my taste. And Borges would have liked Fink's Bar. "I like hourglasses, maps," he had written, and there was something accommodatingly old-fashioned in Fink's décor.

I considered leaving my glass of beer on the bar (to bring it with me seemed an affectation of over familiarity) and approaching the man for the purpose of engaging him in conversation in order to clarify if he was Borges or a foreigner; something about him struck me as foreign, one of the many foreigners who frequent Fink's, in this case a solitary drinker. Of course, I refrained from approaching the man, in actuality surely not Borges. If the fellow discerned my purpose, he would think me crazy. And although I frequented Fink's Bar once in three decades, I didn't want to get a reputation as a nut-case on the premises (or off the premises, Jerusalem being in essence a small town where few things are secret). I finished my beer, left the dead ringer for Borges to his own designs, and departed.

I had to admit that I liked the place – fink's Bar. Solid, conservative, comfortable. And so I didn't wait another thirty years – until my next reincarnation – in order to return. I went back a month later.

This time Borges wasn't sitting at the corner table. Kafka sat there. Or a guy who looked like Kafka. Big ears, sharp features. A kind of humorous gloom hung about him. My mind was preoccupied with opening conversational gambits. Something brilliantly built upon 'The Trial' or, better, 'The Castle', which I prefer. Or maybe something less ostentatious and more humorous:

"Your K – I'm L – L for Lefkowitz." But of course I didn't do so. Kafka might retort, "I'm L, too – for 'Leave me alone', or similar. (I like word play, but not to the extent of being on the receiving end of it, even from Kafka.) I gave up on Kafka.

For a while I stayed away from Fink's bar. Something about the place was getting to me; it intruded into my thoughts at the oddest times. Maybe its former long-



time owner David Rothshield was having his revenge on me for not having frequented his establishment when he was alive. Rothshield was known in his day for his testiness.

Three months later I found myself once more in Fink's, unable to restrain my curiosity about its unusual clientele, I guess.

This time Proust was there – complete to pale face, black cloak, and handlebar mustache. I thought of an opening conversational gambit involving Albertine, but decided the subject was too personal and the approach sophomoric. Borges and Kafka seemed like interesting guys to talk with and, more importantly, guys you could talk with. But Proust was over my head. I left him looking morose over his absinthe.

I told nobody about my apparitions – that's what I was convinced they were. Not even a couple of literature professor acquaintances.

In the end I had to go back. Fink's Bar and its corner table gave me no peace. Henry James said that for true happiness, you must have some absorbing errand. Visiting the corner of Fink's Bar was apparently mine. This time it was Henry James! At first I thought it was Bialik, but a closer look revealed that although the man who sat in the corner table possessed facial features surprisingly similar to those of Bialik, he was, without question, Henry James. Having written my master's thesis on 'The Humor of Henry James' (yes, the dour chap wrote short stories which contained a considerable amount of that commodity), I was familiar with photographs of the writer. It was that writer who sat before me. Nevertheless, Henry James in a Jerusalem bar constituted the ultimate oxymoron. Whereas Borges was "of Jewish stock," Proust had a Jewish mother, and Kafka was Jewish, Henry James represented the essence of Gentile propriety! A man who feared that the obstreperous Yiddish-afflicted English of New York's East Side would corrupt genteel American English, that he was witnessing in it "the Hebrew conquest of New York." The only rational explanation that I found to explain his presence here was that – in an act of unJamesian revenge – he had come to Israel in order to witness the American English conquest of the Hebrew language.

And yet of all the writers who had visited Fink's Bar, James was perhaps the most approachable. He prided himself on politeness; for him it separated the civilized

from the barbarian. I would approach him; the worse that could happen would be that he would dismiss me courteously. I toyed with the idea of opening with "I see you are in your jolly corner – a reference to his story 'The Jolly Corner', but it seemed to me forced. For Henry James the forced was an affront. "Excuse me, sir," I said diffidently, as if I were in an English gentleman's club and not an Israeli pub, "May I sit down?" He didn't answer, nor did he acknowledge my presence in any other way, but simply sat stiffly in his high-collared shirt, vest and jacket, rounded off by bow-tie, and regarded me fixedly with those impassive eyes under his high forehead, as if I had suddenly appeared at his table directly from Mars (I recalled that he had once described himself as on "the one on whom nothing is lost"). I chose to regard his reaction to my request as an assent and seated myself across from him. There ensued a palpable, an almost Jamesian, silence. Finally, in the midst of my striving to think how to open our conversation – I could hardly claim to reopen it (I rejected "Are you indeed the incomparable Mr. Henry James?"), I suddenly recalled that he was famous, or infamous, for his unending and serpentine manner of giving directions. Edith Wharton gave to posterity an impressive description of this tendency.

And so, I reasoned, if I asked him, perforce, how to arrive to a certain place and received a lengthy, halting, minute, circuitous, repetitious series of directions leading nowhere, I would know I had my man. And so I addressed him, "Do you happen to know how to get to (I chose a familiar landmark, not too far away) the *shuk*, that is, the open-air market?"

He regarded me for a moment as if I were a toad, or a rare exotic flower, and then launched into his directions, prefacing them with "I think it is not beyond the realm of possibility that I may be of some assistance to your quest to navigate to the *souk*." With his opening words, I knew that the man who sat across from me was Henry James. And if there were any doubts on my part, he banished them with what followed, as best as I can reconstruct it. "My good man, to put it to you in two words, that is to say, to be more strictly accurate, to be able to arrive at the open-air market, as you so correctly denote it, you had best proceed, well, it is preferable, when all is taken into consideration, to proceed to . . . ah, yes, to proceed down Histadrut street to King George Street named for . . . which of our majesties, I believe it was . . . no matter, where were we? . . . ah, continue to Jaffa Road, I believe it to be the preferred

route . . . hmm, to be sure, the best of all . . . continue past the police station – you will recognize it by a pair of stone lions flanking its entrance . . . hideous beasts, most repulsive, especially their mouths, somewhat reminiscent of the mouths in Rome of . . . at any rate, soon you will, with any good fortune, arrive to the market, should you indeed wish to go, of all places, precisely there."

When he had finished, I was too exhausted to ask him some questions concerning his finest work, in my opinion, 'The Golden bowl.' I staggered back to the bar, had a second beer, then a third. Thus fortified, I had regained the courage to ask, but when I stood up and turned in his direction to do precisely that, he was gone.

I never returned to Fink's Bar. Who might be there next? Shakespeare? True, there was a minor polemic then

raging in the Hebrew press over the question whether Shakespeare knew Hebrew or not, and I could have tried my tankard camaraderie on the bard in an effort to resolve it. (Surely, if he knew Hebrew, it could not be much advanced over my doggedly acquired thirty years' own.) No, I wasn't up to it. I preferred living, if lesser, authors. Let a literary reviewer from *Haaretz* come and try his luck. But on his own initiative. I wasn't going to tell a soul about Fink's unusual visitors. In the future I would stick to imbibing my beers at wedding receptions. It would be easier on my psyche, even if I found myself seated at a table, alone, surrounded by an extended family of TV soap addicts, and not only had I never viewed the program, but could not be sure that I had ever heard of it.

Epilogue: Not long afterward, Fink's Bar closed its doors for good. I couldn't help wondering if its unusual clientele had anything to do with it.

Faulkner, surely, was cursing his missed opportunity.

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

WHY VIDEOPOETRY?

By Ricky Rapoport Friesem

In my 53 years in Israel, I, who grew up in peaceful Canada, have experienced numerous wars, and terrorist attacks. Not surprisingly, the clouds of war that loom over us have figured prominently in my writing. A sampling of these poems appeared in 2019 in a collection, entitled, *Gimme Shelter*, which was subsequently translated and published by Eked House Press, in Hebrew, as *Miklat*.

Although the publication gave me great satisfaction, I can't say that I received much feedback, or sales. A few years passed and I began to feel that maybe, thank goodness, these war-related poems were no longer relevant. And then came October 7. Overnight, we were plunged into an existential trauma and the anxieties of the home front, as reflected in my poems, became, alas, more relevant than ever.

Just about then, Rickey Benjamin, a friend and talented graphic artist and illustrator came up with the idea of adding illustrations to the text of my war poems. The result is VideoPoetry, a rendering that converges poetry with video art and adds an extra dimension to the poetry and may even engage those who are not regular poetry readers, or are intimidated by the very idea of poetry, like some of my grandchildren, for instance.



My hope is that Israelis will share these videos with their contacts abroad, where we are dehumanized and misunderstood, and the tensions of the home front are rarely covered.

The easiest way to view examples of this new project is from my website <https://rickywriter.com/> and clicking on Video Poetry box on the bottom of the home page, or by clicking directly to the YouTube site (sorry for the annoying commercials) using this link: <https://www.youtube.com/@rickyfriesem>.

More videos are in the pipeline, so keep posted.

BOOK REVIEW

By Pesach Rotem

Picnic on Vesuvius: Poems by Ann Bar-Dov

Picnic on Vesuvius is Ann Bar-Dov's second book of poems, following *It's Just Like That* (2016). This new volume contains seventy-four poems divided into three sections.

The first section, "Generally Speaking," includes poems on a wide variety of topics, including, but certainly not limited to, the corona pandemic, the weather, Ann's childhood, her parents, her children, and her difficulties with time management. The title poem, as you would expect, describes a picnic on Mount Vesuvius, before the volcano erupts. The weather is lovely, the view is lovely, the food and drink are lovely, the birds and the flowers are lovely. A few disconcerting omens – little puffs of smoke beyond the trees, a metallic tang in the air, a faint rumble – are pushed out of mind.

Have some more potato chips.
The potatoes are grown here too.
What a good spot for a picnic!
You just have to ignore
that slight
shaking vibration
underneath.

I suppose one could interpret "Picnic on Vesuvius" as a commentary on Israel's complacency leading up to the calamity of October 7, but I read it more broadly as a warning against complacency in general, against ignoring the danger signals in any situation, be it a job, a marriage, one's health, whatever.

I particularly like what I will call – for want of a better, or nicer, word – Ann's hate poems. Of course, I love love poems as much as anybody, but it seems to me that hate and anger and resentment are also valid human emotions that deserve to get expressed as poetry, but rarely get the opportunity. Ann fills that gap with some gems of disdain including "Ungrateful," "Logical Consequences," "Angry," "Living Fueled by Hate," and "Your Dog as Proxy."

I think if I were on the receiving end of one of these poems, I would feel devastated by the brutal force of the put-down and yet, at the same time, a tiny bit of perverse pride in being the inspiration – the muse – for such marvelous poetry.



And then there is "Penis Meditations." "How interesting it must be to have a penis ..." it begins. I was not a psychology major, and am therefore not qualified to opine as to how Ann's penis meditations might align – if at all – with Dr. Freud's theories of penis envy but, as a poet, I am qualified to say it is a very interesting poem and, furthermore, that it is unlike any other poem I have ever read.

Section Two of *Picnic on Vesuvius* is called "Your Roots Are Showing." It contains poems relating, in one way or another, to Jewish themes including Jewish ritual and holidays, Bible and Talmud stories, life in modern Israel, war and terrorism, and antisemitism. In "Traffic Cop Encounter," we see worlds collide as a modern-day police officer encounters the Ethics of the Fathers, related with perfectly dry wit. "The Night Baker" also evokes the Ethics of the Fathers, but this one is not humorous, it is sweet and touching, as is "The Cook" and "The Persistence of Things." "Mr. Yetzer ha-Ra" is comic, "November 1995" is tragic, and "Purim Week, Israel" is downright fun.

For those who appreciate black humor, "Towel Poem" is the blackest black humor you will ever come across. I will say no more and leave it for readers to discover for themselves.

I do have one quibble with this book, and it concerns "Les Mesdames du Sfat." (They say every book review must contain one quibble, and this is mine.) "Les Mesdames du Sfat" is a lovely slice-of-life poem, inspired by Pablo Picasso's painting "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon." I love the poem, but I do not approve of

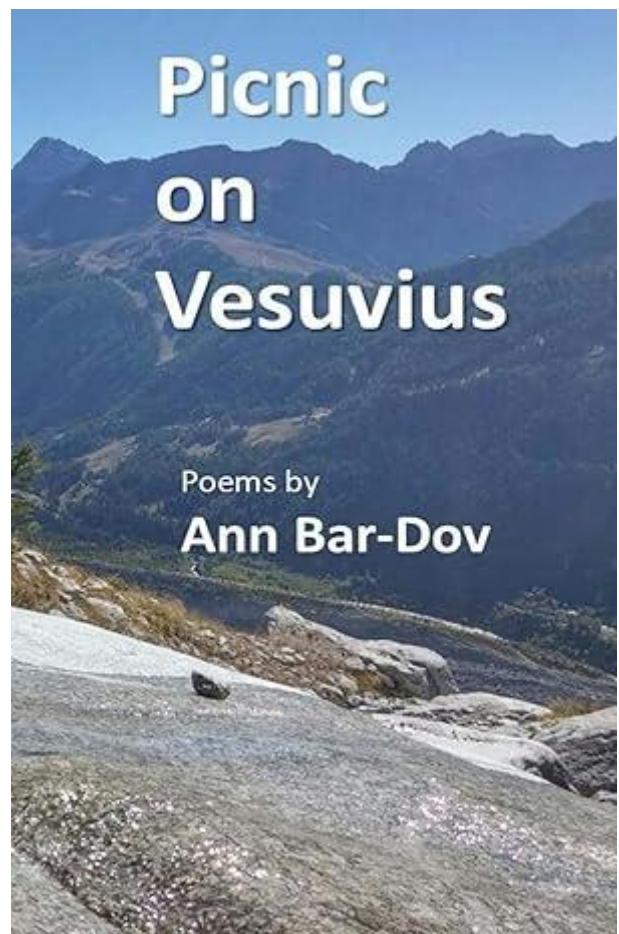
VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Ann's rendering of טְבַל in English as "Sfat." I think it should be "Tsfat." (End of quibble.)

The third and final section of *Picnic on Vesuvius* is "Love, or Something Like It." After all the millions (or billions) of love poems written over the last couple of millenia, I had believed that there was nothing new to say on the subject, but Ann's poems in this section proved me wrong. There are poems on loves past, present, and future, on loves requited and unrequited, on sweet love and love turned sour, on near loves and distant loves, all of them fresh, poignant, and quite moving.

I recommend *Picnic on Vesuvius* very highly. I will end this review with the final stanza of the final poem of the book:

No one can stop the rain.
No one can cancel pain.
There is no cure for the human condition.
And yet
it is that very human thing,
that thing that has no concrete presence,
that can't be seen, that can't be touched,
that connecting thing that we call
love
that gives us strength
to face what must be faced,
to the edge of the possible
and beyond.



Ann's book can be purchased from Amazon

<https://www.amazon.com/Picnic-Vesuvius-Poems-Ann-Bar-Dov/dp/B0FLZDCQX9>

VOICES ISRAEL GROUP OF POETS IN ENGLISH

Books – Elana Wolff

Everybody Knows a Ghost slips through to the mystic, pulses up against forces of darkness, unreason, wonder and puzzlement; ripples with riddles at work in the human mind and the world at large. Ghosts appear as indications, shades, shadows and soundings that tour art, illness, nature and relationship; the nebulousness of memory; the extremities of life struggle.

This is “revelatory work” at its finest. As Wolff courageously writes of life’s mysterious entanglements and death’s spooky actions, “The key is not to fear” but to “make it across.”

—Sandra Barry, author of *Elizabeth Bishop: Nova Scotia’s Home-Made Poet*

This is a sophisticated collection; it takes delight in the mystery of things, how we mortals at times are capable—allowed?—to grasp, see, witness the immortal around us. Wolff asks of her readers to participate in controlled glee, wonderment, alertness, and sometimes ... dread.

—Carmelo Militano, author of *Archeologia Eros*

These poems gaze through “the vernal vault” at “what is sense-perceptible” and illuminated. And when that light is rent—by life’s “game of shades,” daytime hauntings and nighttime dreams—Wolff does not succumb to sadness. With “larging / heart ajar,” she opens to the ineffable: “living still” midst the “dotted dark.”

—Ruth Panofsky, author of *Bring Them Forth*

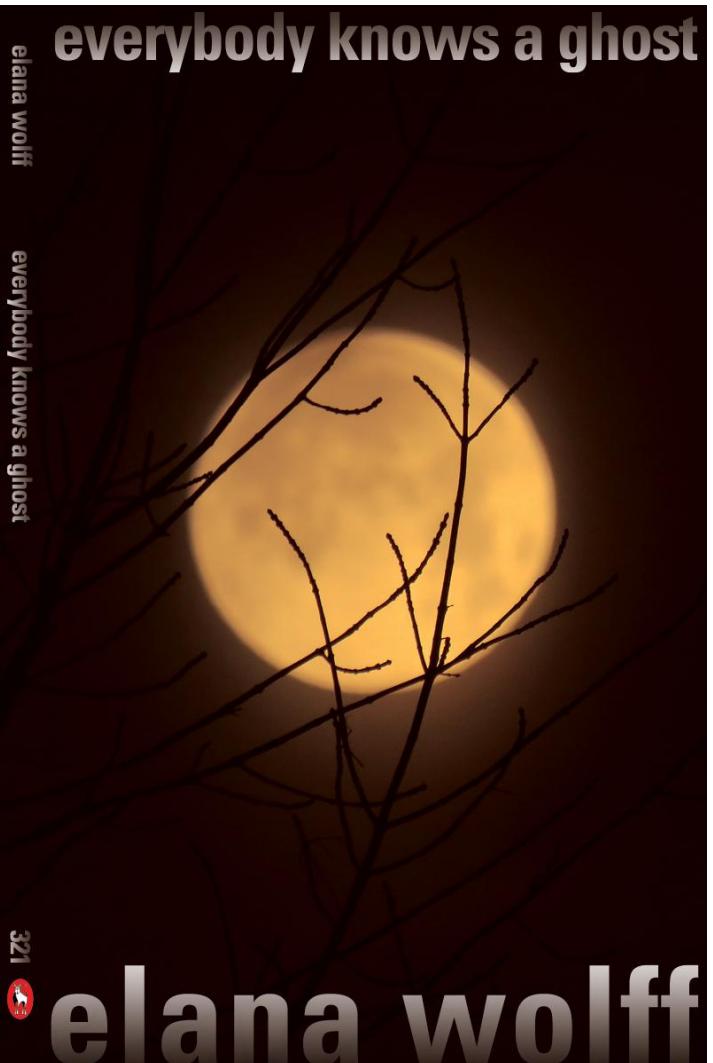
Follow Elana Wolff into current atmospheres (hard to catch, harder to transfigure) and the wild shifting ground of spirits, daemons, echoes, demons, traces of Kafka and love (where can you stand when shadows swirl around you?). *Everybody Knows a Ghost* is a book of moods and ruminations that’s memorable in its medley of voices circling mortality and trauma. In pithy lines and eerie image, these brave broodings address the splendour in our shaken circumstance and the desert of awe that she crosses with us, for us.

—B.W. Powe, author of *Charge in the Global Membrane*



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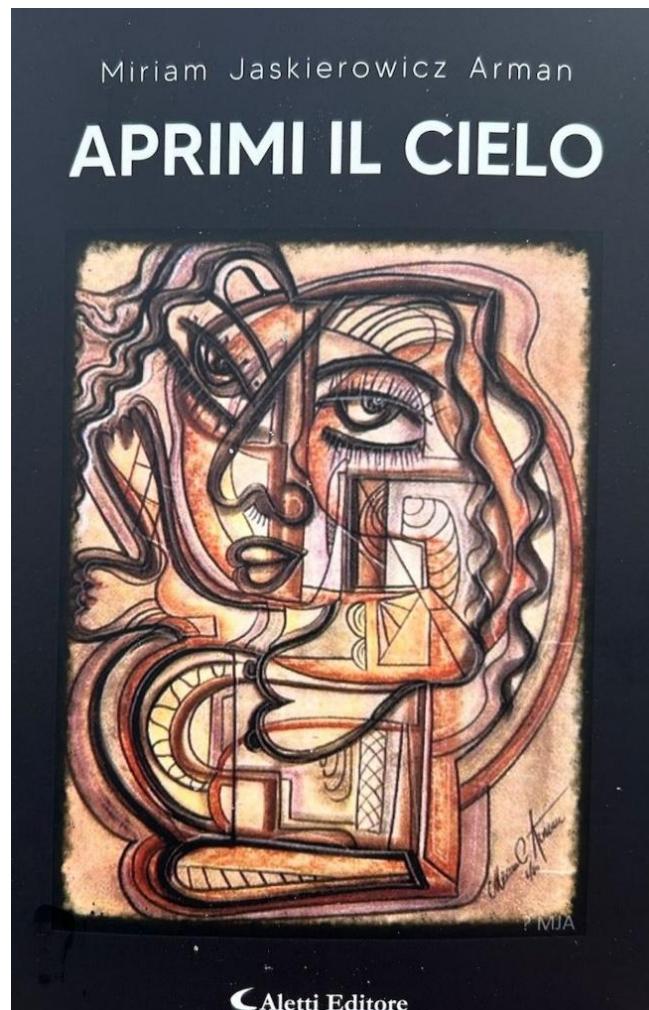
Books – Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman

Italian Book

Preface by Giuseppe Aletti

"Only you, me, and the butterflies are free." Arman moves in a permanent stream of consciousness, as in the finest international literary tradition, starting with the American Beat Generation, from the existential desperation of Gregory Corso, to the dense language of Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whose book I had the honor of publishing as a world premiere, up to Jack Kerouac and the emergence of the magma flow in the evocative epic "Mexico City Blues." This stylistic signature is enriched by an intense inner musicality, facilitated by a use of repetitions and recurring images (light, soul, wind, voice, tears, silence) in a symbolic, sometimes mystical, often visionary, use of language. The connection with God is constant, both in the Jewish tradition of "Shechina," "Hashem," "Sinai," and as an inner experience of elevation and struggle for self-affirmation. Even the references to the Holocaust are poignant, the pain and loss, up to the survival of the trauma experienced that will accompany us through all the seasons we will encounter, "For my mother," "From dreams will come...", "Only butterflies are free." "Open the sky to me" by Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman tells us that something has happened. It is the result of an experience, often a loss or a wound; this is why we need poets and their representations of reality in verse, to give comfort to those who feel orphaned by separation. It is a collection that inspires a profound exploration of the self, from body to mind. Poetry is often a tool for claiming, liberation, and healing. "Construction of the SELF," - 10 - Draft "From truth arises freedom." The emotional dichotomy moves between laceration and rebirth because, to paraphrase the words of a mystic, "pain is certainly in living, but suffering is a choice," and Arman, despite living with a centuries-old wound, seeks to find a profound meaning to our life arc through art and poetic creation. The references to natural elements are particularly effective as symbols of infinity, transformation, and the divine. "The Portico," "Canticle of the Wind," "The Golden Thread," the surrounding reality does not remain passive and distant like a frame that has been left standing for too long in a living room that no one notices anymore, but becomes

a mirror reflection of our emotional state. "Open the Sky for Me" empathizes with the quote in the multigenerational book "Letters to a Young Poet" by the great poet Rainer Maria Rilke, in which he writes that "Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses just waiting to see us one day beautiful and brave. Perhaps all terror is ultimately something helpless that wants our love." In these pages, Miriam Jaskierowicz Arman surprises with her ability to investigate being and existence, with the courage only poets possess to glimpse our shadowy areas, and even sometimes those in darkness, to be illuminated with the written word, and verse in particular, because spreading words on the blank page is a survival that sings of our participation in life.



MEMBER'S PHOTO

Eshel in the Negev - Photo and Poem by Donna Bechar

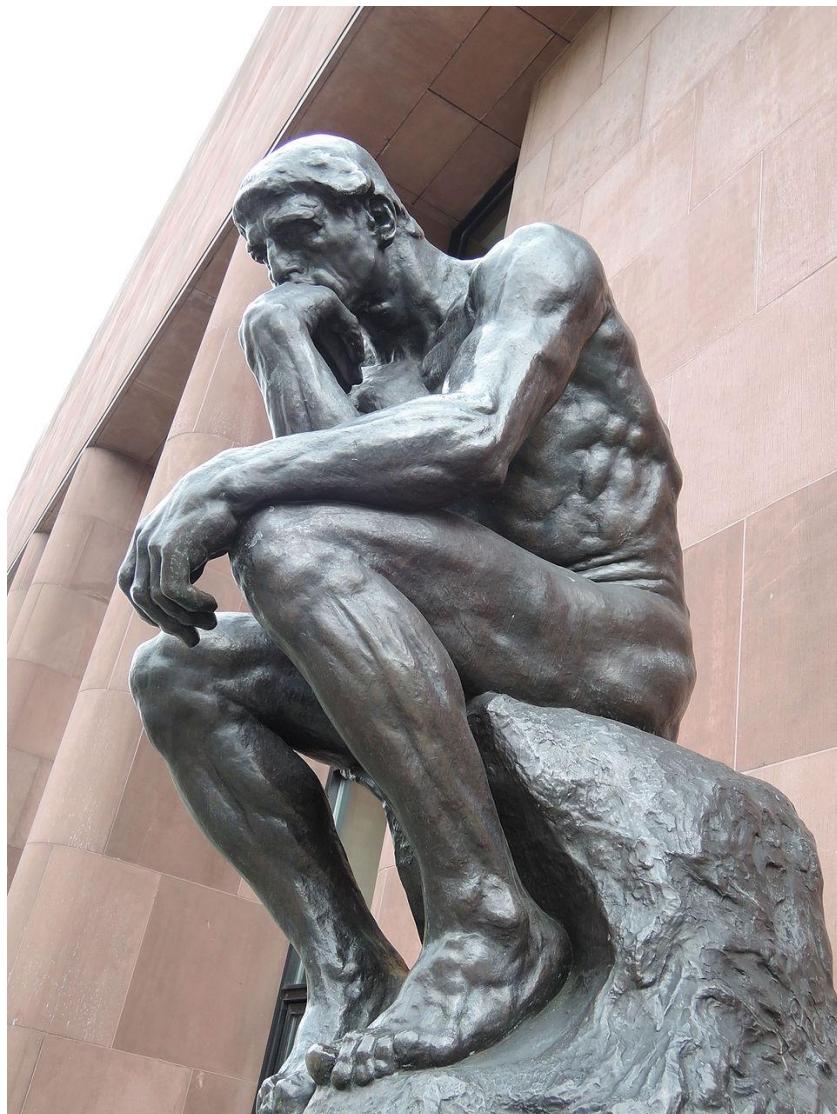
I savor the warm dry daytime air and wide-graced vista
of this desert, filled with neither null nor void nor emptiness
but fecund with the vastness of wind-and-rain-chiseled
strata of eons-hewn escarpments, buttes and mountains
and sated with the sun-bezeled breezes that fondle
the shading pillows of its native, resilient eshel tree -
its myriad minuscule salt-encrusted leaves so deceptively
delicate in their stronghold on fine-boned twigs
while its roots route and imbibe twinings of water hoarded
in depths under the sweeping-miled thirsting dusty carpet
and drunk by frizzy-haired brush, by burrowing critters
and by the camouflaged fauna awaiting cool night



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THE THINKER (*LE PENSEUR*), BY AUGUSTE RODIN

Initially named *The Poet (Le Poète)*



*"I exist as I am, that is enough,
If no other in the world be aware I sit content"*
From *Song of Myself*, Walt Whitman

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Thinker#/media/File:Le_Penseur_by_Rodin_\(Kunsthalle_Bielefeld\)_2014-04-10.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Thinker#/media/File:Le_Penseur_by_Rodin_(Kunsthalle_Bielefeld)_2014-04-10.JPG)
[Art and poem, selected by the editor]

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